

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

GENERAL REMARKS

At the outset, it appears as though the office examined the claims as originally filed rather than as amended under Art. 19 in the International phase. The above amendments and following discussion is relative to the claims as amended under Art. 19.

OBJECTIONS

The Office objected to claims 1 and 19 for various informalities. Applicant agrees and amended claims 1 and 19 according to the examiner's suggestions. The objection should thus be overcome.

35 USC §112

The Office rejected claims 1-16 as being indefinite for lack of clarity with respect to the designated items for term 'flow ratio' in claims 1 and 9. Applicant amended claims 1 and 9 to specify that the flow ratio is specific to both, the ratio of the feed stream to the second reflux stream, and the ratio of the first portion of the bottom product stream to the second portion of the bottom product stream. The rejection should thus be overcome.

35 USC 103

The Office rejected **claims 1-12, 15, and 16** under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Sorenson (U.S. Pat. No. 5,685,170) in view of Yao et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,116,050). The applicant respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

As amended herein, claims 1 and 9 expressly require that the flow ratios of both, the feed stream to the second reflux stream, and the first portion of the bottom product stream to the second portion of the bottom product stream are used to control the degree of recovery of C2 components in the distillation column bottom product stream, and that the absorber overhead product in such plants is fed to a liquefaction plant. Such configurations and methods are neither taught nor suggested in the cited art. Therefore, and at least for those reasons, the rejection should no longer be sustained.

The Office rejected **claims 13-14** under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Sorenson in view of Yao et al. as applied above and further view of Wilkinson et al. (U.S. Pat. App. No. 2003/0005722). Applicant again respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

With respect to the combination of Sorenson and Yao et al., the same defects and arguments as provided above apply and are not reiterated here. A combination with Wilkinson fails to remedy these defects. Therefore, and at least for those reasons, the rejection should no longer be sustained.

The Office rejected **claims 17-20** under 35 USC 103 as being obvious over Yao et al. in view of Wilkinson and Sorenson. The applicant once more respectfully disagrees, especially in view of the amendments herein.

As amended herein, claim 17 expressly recites a method of variably recovering C2 from a feed gas to a LNG liquefaction plant while maintaining recovery of C3 at 95% or more in which the step of adjusting the flow ratio of an absorber feed to a second reflux to the absorber and the step of adjusting the temperature of the absorber bottom product is used to control a degree of recovery of C2 components in a distillation column bottom product stream. Once more, such elements are neither taught nor suggested in the cited art. Therefore, and at least for those reasons, the rejection should no longer be sustained.

Request For Allowance

Claims 1-2, 4-9, and 11-20 are pending in this application. The applicant requests allowance of all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,
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